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14. ABSTRACT

Although Anaconda was successful in achieving its objective of clearing al Qaeda fighters out of the Shah-i-Kot Valley, the planning and execution errors associated with this operation have provided a wealth of valuable lessons for the United States military. This paper reviews the events of Anaconda and through a detailed analysis, examines the various criticisms it received. Critical shortfalls associated with CENTCOM's upper level command and control structure are revealed as the primary source of the confusion and problems surrounding the operation. Particular attention is paid to General Frank's controversial decision to lead such a large military effort from his Tampa headquarters; nine and a half time-zones away from the fight. It is concluded that despite errors resulting from this decision, it was in fact a viable strategy that offered many inherent benefits. By implementing the lessons learned from General Franks' *long distance leadership*, in conjunction with the latest academic recommendations on the subject, valuable guidelines are provided for combatant commanders choosing to lead this country's future conflicts from a headquarters geographically removed from the theater of operation.

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CRITICISMS ASSOCIATED WITH OPERATION ANACONDA
CAN LONG DISTANCE LEADERSHIP BE EFFECTIVE?

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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Abstract

Criticisms Associated With Operation Anaconda
Can Long Distance Leadership Be Effective?

Although Anaconda was successful in achieving its objective of clearing al Qaeda fighters out of the Shah-i-Kot Valley, the planning and execution errors associated with this operation have provided a wealth of valuable lessons for the United States military. This paper reviews the events of Anaconda and through a detailed analysis, examines the various criticisms it received. Critical shortfalls associated with CENTCOM's upper level command and control structure are revealed as the primary source of the confusion and problems surrounding the operation. Particular attention is paid to General Frank's controversial decision to lead such a large military effort from his Tampa headquarters; nine and a half time-zones away from the fight. It is concluded that despite errors resulting from this decision, it was in fact a viable strategy that offered many inherent benefits. By implementing the lessons learned from General Franks' *long distance leadership,* in conjunction with the latest academic recommendations on the subject, valuable guidelines are provided for combatant commanders choosing to lead this country's future conflicts from a headquarters geographically removed from the theater of operation.

INTRODUCTION

The decisions and events leading up to Operation Anaconda provide an ideal case study for many critical elements of modern day warfare. Although General Tommy Franks, the Combatant Commander in charge of Central Command (CENTCOM) during Operations Enduring Freedom (OEF), declared Anaconda "an unqualified and absolute success," it has received significant criticism from both those within and outside military channels.[1] The media for example, reacted negatively to the operation and focused their reporting on the loss of Americans lives, rather than the overall results of the conflict.[2] On the military side there are many who claim senior leadership errors caused much of the confusion observed during the planning and execution phases. This paper reviews the events of Operation Anaconda and examines the various criticisms it received. Particular attention is paid to the use of *long distance leadership*, which is one of the more highly publicized criticisms of the Operation. It will be argued that leading a large military effort, such as Anaconda, from a headquarters geographically removed from the theater of operation is a viable strategy for the twenty-first century Combatant Commander; assuming the long distance leadership tenets presented in this paper are followed.

BACKGROUND

"The purpose of Operation Anaconda was to dig pockets of al Qaeda forces out of intricate caves in the rugged terrain of the Shah-e-Kot [*sic*] Valley . . . ,"[3] located roughly halfway up the Afghanistan-Pakistan border near the town of Gardez (see figure 1). The valley floor started at 8,500 feet and was surrounded by towering snow capped mountains

1. Tommy Franks, *American Soldier* (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 2004), 381.
2. Ibid.
3. Robert H. McElroy, "Afghanistan: Fire Support for Operation Anaconda," *Field Artillery*, September-October 2002, http://www.proquest.com/ (accessed 21 August 2006).

Fig. 1. Location of Shah-i-Kot Valley in Afghanistan.[4]

creating an extremely challenging operating environment for both man and machine.[5] Anaconda ". . . promised to be *the culminating point* of the war", ridding the country of enemy forces once and for all.[6] The name of the operation stemmed from the geometry of the friendly *course of action* (COA) which aimed ". . . to encircle and squeeze into extinction . . ." the enemy forces within the Shah-i-Kot valley.[7] The tactic used was referred to as the "hammer and anvil."[8] The *hammer* element, comprised primarily of Afghan fighters and Green Berets, was designed to force the enemy into blocking positions created by the *anvil*

4. Rebecca Grant, "The Echoes of Anaconda," *Air Force Magazine*, April 2005, 49.
5. Gordon Forbes III, *Operation Anaconda: The Battle for Robert's Ridge*, Military Channel Video, 60 min., 2004, videocassette.
6. Sean Naylor, *Not a Good Day to Die* (New York, NY: The Berkley Publishing Group, 2005), 87.
7. Franks, *American Soldier*, 377.
8. Forbes III, *Operation Anaconda: The Battle for Robert's Ridge*, videocassette.

teams dispersed throughout the mountains east of the valley.[9] These blocking positions were located along the expected escape routes key al Qaeda leaders would most likely use in order to disappear into Pakistan, should they be overrun by coalition forces.[10]

Anaconda was scheduled to begin on 27 February 2002 however, inclement weather delayed its start date to the second of March.[11] It was the largest massed military effort up to that point in OEF and included both Special Operation Forces (SOF) and conventional forces.[12] It consisted of ". . . light infantry from the 10th Mountain and the 101st Airborne Divisions, American Special Forces and British, Australian, German, Danish, Canadian, and French SOF, as well as Pashtun and Panjshiri Afghan troops."[13] This combined force representing eight nations totaled 1411 strong.[14] Intelligence reports indicated there would only be ". . . 150 to 250 bad guys in the valley . . ."[15] and the expected response "was that they weren't going to stand and fight."[16] Unfortunately, both assumptions would turn out to be incorrect. Coalition troops quickly found themselves facing an enemy force nearly five times the initial estimate with an aggressive fighting spirit.[17] Al Qaeda leaders declared this a *Jihad* and were able to recruit roughly 1,000 terrorists from surrounding countries. They were convinced this was the time to finally defeat the invading coalition forces as they had done against the Soviet army twice before in the very same valley.[18] The mindset, all the way up to the Pentagon, ". . . was that victory was assured before the battle had even

9. Forbes III, Operation Anaconda: The Battle for Robert's Ridge, videocassette.
10. Ibid.
11. Franks, *American Soldier*, 379.
12. Grant, "The Echoes of Anaconda", 47.
13. Franks, *American Soldier*, 377.
14. Rebecca Grant, Task Force Enduring Look, and the Office of Air Force Lessons Learned (AF/XOL), "Operation Anaconda: An Air Power Perspective," (Washington, DC: Headquarters U.S. Air Force, 07 February 2005), 3.
15. Naylor, Not a Good Day to Die, 121.
16. Ibid.,120.
17. Forbes III, Operation Anaconda: The Battle for Robert's Ridge, videocassette.
18. Ibid.

begun."[19] Initial planning estimated a quick operation taking only three days time;[20] however, what ensued was a two week long vicious conflict in which eight Americans lost their lives and 80 more were wounded.[21]

In order to fully understand the problems that occurred during Anaconda, it is important to define the key players and their roles in this operation. As previously mentioned, the CENTCOM Combatant Commander during OEF was General Tommy Franks. He relieved General Tony Zinni in July 2000 and operated from CENTCOM headquarters in Tampa Florida.[22] By the outset of Operation Anaconda he had been performing the job for over a year and half and possessed a solid understanding of CENTCOM operations. As outlined in joint doctrine, the Command and Control (C2) relationship is left to the discretion of the Combatant Commander.[23] General Franks developed his C2 framework around both *functional commands* and *subordinate joint commands*. By March 2002 the size and composition of the military within Afghanistan had changed significantly since OEF began five months prior. Initially the war was fought exclusively with Special Forces; however, as time progressed conventional units joined the fight. As a result, the C2 structure was modified over the months to accommodate these force composition changes. At the time of Operation Anaconda, the following key positions had been established: General Mikolashek, Combined Forces Land Component Commander (CFLCC), located at Camp Doha, Kuwait; General Moseley, Combined Forces Air

19. Naylor, Not a Good Day to Die, 120.
20. Ibid., 118.
21. Grant, Task Force Enduring Look, and the Office of Air Force Lessons Learned (AF/XOL), "Operation Anaconda: An Air Power Perspective", 3.
22. Franks, *American Soldier*, 198.
23. "Forces/Capabilities Handbook," *Joint Military Operations Reference Guide*, U.S. Naval War College course material NWC 3153J (Newport, RI: U.S. Naval War College, Joint Military Operations Department, August 2006), 141.

Component Commander (CFACC), located at Prince Sultan Air Base, Saudi Arabia; Admiral Calland, Combined Forces Special Operations Component Commander (CFSOCC), headquartered in Qatar; and General Hagenbeck, Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) Mountain located at Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan.[24] The development and capabilities of CJTF Mountain, the working relationships between the Component Commanders, and the communication methods utilized throughout the CENTCOM chain-of-command were directly or indirectly associated with many of the criticisms surrounding Anaconda and will be further analyzed in this paper.

Coordination problems between the air and land components became evident from the start of Anaconda and led to confusion throughout the theater. A prime example was that carrier strike group commanders, responsible for a majority of the strike-fighter missions, were not completely informed of the plan.[25] As a result, the USS John C. Stennis aircraft carrier unknowingly canceled all flight operations during the first day of Operation Anaconda so the crew could enjoy a steel beach picnic.[26] In the air information was equally confusing. A navy F/A-18C pilot who flew multiple missions during Operation Anaconda stated, "There was a lot of chaos down there those first few days. . . . The initial plan that they had constructed for the grid system overhead the target area for organizing the flow of aircraft in and out was somewhat disorganized, and it was hard to work the target area and deconflict with other aircraft out there."[27] Similar frustration was expressed by two Air Force pilots flying close air support for the crew of a downed helicopter taking relentless enemy fire atop Takur Ghar mountain. The fighter pilots, desperately needed by the downed helicopter crew,

24. Col Kevin Christie (Liaison between CFLCC and CFSOCC during Operation Anaconda), interview by the author, 18 September 2006.
25. Grant, "The Echoes of Anaconda", 49.
26. Ibid., 50.
27. Ibid., 51.

recalled having both fuel and ordnance to remain on station but were ordered to return-to-base for no apparent reason by AWACS controllers as a result of a C2 breakdown.[28] Probably the most obvious coordination failure occurred during the opening moments of Anaconda when an AC-130 accidentally fired upon Afghan forces. In the confusion, this event inadvertently caused other much needed strikes to be aborted, leaving ground forces vulnerable to enemy attacks.[29] Fortunately, even with all the confusion surrounding Anaconda, there was not a single fratricide incident during the entire operation.[30]

ANALYSIS OF PROBLEMS

As previously highlighted, Operation Anaconda was plagued from the beginning with coordination difficulties. This section will examine theories as to what caused many of these problems.

One of the most widely discussed errors of Anaconda is shortfalls associated with its command and control (C2) structure. C2 design is extremely important in any operation since it ". . . is the principal means by which a theater commander sequences and synchronizes joint force activities. . . ."[31] Basic tenets of sound C2 are: unity-of-effort, unity-of-command, centralized control with decentralized execution, simplicity, and interoperability.[32] Upon dissecting the Anaconda C2 structure, it becomes obvious that several of these important concepts were violated.

Examining the evolution of Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) Mountain provides a good vantage point for analyzing a majority of the C2 problems experienced during

28. Forbes III, Operation Anaconda: The Battle for Robert's Ridge, videocassette.
29. Grant, "The Echoes of Anaconda", 50.
30. McElroy, "Afghanistan: Fire Support for Operation Anaconda"
31. Milan Vego, *Operational Warfare* (Newport, RI: U.S. Naval War College, Joint Military Operations Department, 2000), 187.
32. Ibid.

Anaconda. As discussed previously, the force composition in Afghanistan changed significantly as the conflict progressed. Initially, fighting was conducted exclusively with Special Forces coordinating directly with the CFACC for air support.[33] This proved to be a highly effective relationship; however, once conventional forces began arriving on the scene changes were required. By mid December 2001 the previously underemployed CFLCC quickly found itself overwhelmed with twenty-five different units all reporting to General Mikolashek. This resulted in a *flat* C2 structure which weakened General Mikolashek's ability to maintain proper visibility over his command. As a consequence there were times when staff officers were making decisions and issuing orders typically reserved for the component commander.[34] The first major conflict overseen by the CFLCC was Tora Bora. As a result of receiving major criticism for the way it was handled, General Mikolashek created *CFLCC Forward* to increase his situational awareness and command presence in Afghanistan.[35] General Hagenbeck, the commander of the 10th Mountain Division, was selected to command CFLCC Forward, which would later be renamed CJTF Mountain (CJTF MTN).[36] Initially General Hagenbeck maintained his location in Karshi Khanabad (K2) Uzbekistan;[37] however, he eventually moved his headquarters to Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan during the month of February to better prepare for Anaconda, the first operation he would be directed to lead.[38] A significant C2 error occurred when General Hagenbeck designated himself a *Joint Force Commander*. For good reason joint doctrine states that only the ". . . Secretary of Defense, a combatant commander, a subordinate unified commander, or

33. Mark G. Davis, "Operation Anaconda: Command and Confusion in Joint Warfare" (master's thesis, Maxwell AFB, AL: School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, Air University, 2004), 25.
34. Ibid., 27.
35. Ibid., 29.
36. Ibid., 28-29.
37. Ibid., 28.
38. Naylor, Not a Good Day to Die, 93.

an existing JTF commander" can establish a JTF.[39] Several negative consequences resulted from this decision.

To begin, 10th Mountain was not properly trained, manned, or equipped to handle the demands of a JTF.[40] They were initially sent into theater to provide compound security at K2 in Uzbekistan;[41] however, General Hagenbeck and his staff quickly found themselves planning Anaconda, the largest U.S. military operation since Desert Storm.[42] Planning errors were inevitable, especially considering "only three personnel in CJTF MTN had ever operated in a joint environment. . . ."[43] Probably the most significant weakness was the lack of a Tactical Air Control Party (TACP), which negatively impacted CJTF MTN's ability to successfully coordinate air power requirements. This *interoperability* shortfall proved costly, especially during the initial phases of the operation.[44]

Another serious problem associated with CJTF MTN was that of command authority. By definition, "*unity of command* means having a single commander control all the forces assigned to a particular mission."[45] This was not the case for General Hagenbeck since he did not have *operational control* over critical units participating in Anaconda; notably Special Forces. As a result of this flawed C2 structure, General Hagenbeck needed approval from Admiral Calland before he could task, organize, or direct these forces.[46] Figure 2 shows the command relationships for CJTF MTN. An argument can be made for the fact that General Franks should have granted General Hagenbeck authority equal to that of other

39. Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Unified Action Armed Forces, Joint Publication (JP) 0-2 (Washington, DC: CJCS, 10 July 2001), XV.
40. Davis, "Operation Anaconda: Command and Confusion in Joint Warfare", 31.
41. Ibid., 53.
42. Naylor, Not a Good Day to Die, 92.
43. Davis, "Operation Anaconda: Command and Confusion in Joint Warfare", 32.
44. Ibid., 54.
45. Vego, *Operational Warfare*, 187.
46. Davis, "Operation Anaconda: Command and Confusion in Joint Warfare", 32.

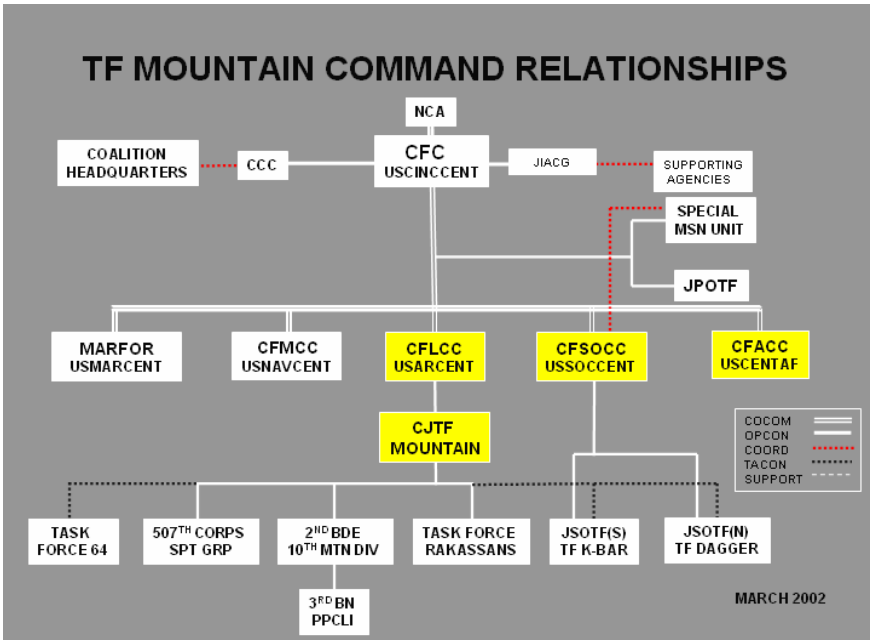

Fig. 2. CJTF Mountain command relationships.[47]

component commands in theater, or at a minimum designated CJTF MTN as a *supported* command.[48] What resulted was an ad hoc C2 setup which violated the tenet of *simplicity* and rightfully caused officers working at the CJTF MTN Tactical Operations Center (TOC) to feel uneasy. Lead planner Major Wille captured these sentiments by stating, "There's definitely some concern any time you've got two forces working in the same location, and there's so little known about what one of them is doing."[49]

Intelligence capability shortfalls also stemmed for General Hagenbeck's improperly manned staff. Unfortunately, CJTF MTN ". . . did not posses a fully functioning intelligence cell; rather it inherited an ad hoc composite intelligence section that was not capable of developing the high fidelity intelligence required by a JTF."[50] This resulted in a significant

47. Pat Sweeney, "Operational Command and Control," Powerpoint, June 2003, Newport, RI: U.S. Naval War College, Joint Military Operations Department, instructional presentation for Fall 2006 JMO II-07 lesson.
48. Davis, "Operation Anaconda: Command and Confusion in Joint Warfare", 35.
49. Naylor, Not a Good Day to Die, 92.
50. Davis, "Operation Anaconda: Command and Confusion in Joint Warfare", 33.

underestimation of the enemy count, capabilities, and response.[51] There are many, including the liaison between CFLCC and CFSOCC (Colonel Christie USA), who felt these intelligence errors were the primary cause of the confusion observed during Anaconda.[52]

The last major criticism of Anaconda this paper will examine is the claim that a Combatant Commander cannot effectively lead a large operation, such as this, from a headquarters geographically removed from the theater of operation (TOO).[53] As previously mentioned, General Franks elected to command OEF from his headquarters in Tampa, Florida; nine and a half time zones away from Afghanistan. Although there are those who disagree with this decision, he had several very defensible reasons for not relocating closer to the TOO. After the unexpected attacks of 11 September 2001, CENTCOM had only ten days to produce a highly involved plan aimed to "destroy al Qaeda in Afghanistan; and . . . remove the Taliban regime."[54] Rather than wasting valuable time packing up, dealing with personnel pre-deployment issues, relocating, unpacking, setting up, and then worrying about creating a viable COA, he elected to focus his staff's entire attention to planning. Additionally, in response to the Department of Defense's request to keep the troop level low in Afghanistan, General Franks decided to prioritize sending only combat forces into theater.[55]

There are numerous other benefits associated with operating from a fixed headquarters in the United States. With the current high demand for overseas deployment requirements, any opportunity to keep service members home with family is a positive move towards addressing military retention concerns. Additionally, a permanent stateside

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51. Davis, "Operation Anaconda: Command and Confusion in Joint Warfare", 33.
52. Christie, interview.
53. Davis, "Operation Anaconda: Command and Confusion in Joint Warfare", 12.
54. Franks, *American Soldier*, 251-252.
55. Davis, "Operation Anaconda: Command and Confusion in Joint Warfare", 12

headquarters makes it more feasible and desirable for long-term civilian contractors to supplement military staffs. This benefit is critical to enhancing *continuity* in an environment in which billet turnover routinely occurs every couple of years. A fixed headquarters is not only advantageous to the human element, but also greatly benefits operating equipment. Deployments are notorious for damaging valuable electronics, such as critical planning computers, communication tools, and various other fragile electronic devices. Undesirable operational delays frequently occur while waiting for equipment repairs or full system replacements to arrive in theater. Lastly, by maintaining a stateside headquarters the need for *operational protection* is greatly reduced. An overseas headquarters, especially in the CENTCOM area of responsibility (AOR), requires a robust security effort in a theater which more than likely is operating under a restrictive force cap. The issue of long distance leadership goes well beyond the specifics of Operation Anaconda as it will no doubt be a serious consideration for future conflicts.

LONG DISTANCE LEADERSHIP

The days of an *operational commander* issuing face-to-face orders on the battlefield are over. Typically no more than one or two levels of the operational chain-of-command are present in the same location to discuss combat plans, issue orders, and oversee events. Therefore, *long distance leadership* is a required element of modern day combat. Although it adds inherent challenges, if handled correctly, combatant commanders can lead large operations from a distant headquarters with the same effectiveness as being co-located with subordinate officers.

The most challenging and critical aspect of distant leadership is *communication*.[56] Fortunately, advancements in technology have produced a variety of highly effective communication tools for today's leaders such as: satellite phones, pagers, secure email, and video-teleconferences (VTC). When used correctly, these tools can greatly enhance the ability of a combatant commander to effectively communicate over long distances both up and down the chain-of-command. During Operation Anaconda, General Franks was criticized as a long distance leader for creating miscommunication as a result of being over-reliant on VTCs.[57] Although managing large operations with the aid of VTCs may seem straightforward at first, there are many subtle limitations and pitfalls, which if not handled correctly can quickly manifest into substantial problems. Like any new tool, user training is critical to ensure maximum output from its capabilities. Unfortunately, these types of instructions are not included in the box in which the equipment is shipped. Instead, they evolve from years of testing and academic research. As a result of globalization and the increased number of multinational corporations, the concept of leading large operations from afar has received a significant amount of recent attention. There a many newly developed guidelines being implemented by the business world which are highly transferable to military leadership. Of these, proper VTC usage has been identified as one of the most critical communication skills necessary to be an effective long distance leader.

It is no surprise that "face-to-face meetings are the richest form of communication because participants benefit from multiple information cues, immediate feedback and

56. Stacey L. Connaughton, and John A. Daly, "Leadership in the New Millennium: Communicating Beyond Temporal, Spatial, and Geographical Boundaries," in Chapter 6 of the *Communication Yearbook 29* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc, 2005), 190.
57. James McPherson, "Operation Anaconda: Command and Control through VTC" (unpublished research paper, Newport, RI: U.S. Naval War College, Joint Military Operations Department, 2005), 3.

personal focus."[58] As a result, VTCs do have inherent shortfalls which must be addressed in order to ensure optimum results. The most common issue, which directly applies to military command structures, is the tendency for subordinates to demonstrate reluctance towards interjecting comments in the presence of senior officers, especially during VTCs involving multiple sites.[59] The primary reason for this is that VTCs, by their nature, tend to create a stiff atmosphere of one-way monologues, rather than encouraging open debate.[60] Therefore, VTCs have the propensity to violate important tenets of *strategic level communication*: most notably the requirements for "sharing information, not controlling it" and "maintaining open dialogues, not rank-determined discussions."[61] By acknowledging this fact up front, a combatant commander can create an environment conducive to open dialogue, thereby ensuring all questions are answered and the views of every participant are heard.

Because of the many benefits associated with personal contact, it should not be totally dismissed as a viable communication strategy for the long distance leader.[62] The ideal time to implement a face-to-face meeting is during the initial team building phase of an operation because "it allows individuals to observe others' responses to situations and to read their facial expressions, gestures, tone, and vocal intonations."[63] By enabling team member to form *trusted relationships,* in person, at the onset of an operation, future communication through virtual means, such as video-teleconferences, will be significantly more effective. An added challenge for distant leaders in military organizations is frequent turnover rates. This was prevalent during the planning for Anaconda as a result of the Air Force's ninety day

58. McPherson, "Operation Anaconda: Command and Control through VTC", 6.
59. Ibid., 12.
60. Ibid., 13.
61. Michael Flowers, "Improving Strategic Leadership," *Military Review*, March-April 2004, 41.
62. Mike Burtha, and Stacey L. Connaughton, "Learning the Secrets of Long-Distance Leadership," *KM Review* Vol. 7, Iss. 1 (March-April 2004): 24.
63. Ibid.

rotation cycle.[64] Thus, attention should be given to ensure that members who join the planning team late are afforded the opportunity for face-to-face contact with those they will be working with in the virtual environment. Apparently, "the CFLCC and the CFACC were having trouble communicating because Moseley and Mikolashek did not have a strong working relationship."[65] Perhaps this technique for fostering team-building would have been able to prevent the counterproductive personality conflicts observed between General Moseley, General Mikolashek, and their staffs.

Frequency of communication is also an important consideration which must be a priority for the long distance leader. It is critical to ensure all elements of the team are regularly *kept in the loop*.[66] This is especially true during the planning phases of a large military operation, such as Anaconda. Coordination failures and inefficiencies will quickly develop as a result of communication gaps. The best way to counter these problems is with regularly scheduled meetings, utilizing virtual communication tools such as VTCs.[67] The time and frequency of these meetings will generally be dictated by the command headquarters; however, the schedule of subordinate units must be considered. In military terms this is refereed to as the *battle rhythm*.

Joint doctrine provides useful guidance for battle rhythm planning. As defined in Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, "A command headquarters battle rhythm is its daily operations cycle for briefings, meetings, and report requirements. A battle rhythm is essential to support decision-making, staff actions, and higher headquarters information requirements. . . ."[68]

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64. Naylor, *Not a Good Day to Die,136.*
65. Ibid.
66. Burtha and Connaughton, "Learning the Secrets of Long-Distance Leadership", 25.
67. Ibid.
68. Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Operations, Joint Publication (JP) 3-0 (Washington, DC: CJCS, 17 September 2006), III-11.

Additionally, JP 3-0 highlights the importance of synchronizing meeting schedules to best accommodate the needs of all members involved, to include ". . . higher, lower, and adjacent commands. . . ."[69] Probably the most obvious, yet challenging consideration when planning international meetings and deadlines is time zone differences. During Operation Anaconda ". . . the battle rhythm in theater tended to operate on Eastern Standard Time rather than local time."[70] As can be imagined, this caused a significant amount of *friction* throughout the TOO and undoubtedly had a negative impact on coordination and planning.[71] Thus, combatant commanders leading from a headquarters multiple time zones away from the fight should consider adjusting their daily routine to accommodate the war fighter's schedule in theater.

Another critical element to factor into the design of the combatant commands daily routine is the time demands associated with scheduled events. As suggested in JP 3-0, "A battle rhythm should be designed to minimize the time the commander and key staff members spend attending meetings and listening to briefings."[72] This consideration also applies to the members of subordinate commands. During Operation Anaconda, CENTCOM held three VTCs each day in which all component commands were expected to participate. As a result of the time demands associated with these meetings and the time zone issues previously discussed, subordinate command staff members reported feeling strained by the aggressive CENTCOM directed battle rhythm.[73]

Accessibility is an important consideration for a long distance leader, especially during the critical planning and execution phases of a large operation.[74] Although

69. Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Operations, Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, III-12.
70. Davis, "Operation Anaconda: Command and Confusion in Joint Warfare", 13.
71. Ibid.
72. Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Operations, Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, III-11.
73. Naylor, *Not a Good Day to Die*,152.
74. Connaughton and Daly, "Leadership in the New Millennium: Communicating Beyond Temporal, Spatial, and Geographical Boundaries", 195.

CENTCOM held three structured VTC meetings each day, component commands reported being frustrated with CENTCOM headquarters availability.[75] There were many instances in which decisions had to be made between these scheduled meetings; however, access to higher level leadership was extremely difficult to gain. Upon investigation it was reveled that these gaps in accessibility corresponded directly to the Secretary of Defenses daily Pentagon press briefings. General Franks and his staff would spend many hours each day preparing for these press conferences and during that time made themselves unavailable to those in the TOO.[76] This daily breakdown in C2 could have easily been avoided had General Franks prioritized accessibility as a critical long distance leadership trait.

The final leadership consideration to be discussed is the importance of an operational commander maintaining the proper perspective regarding the differing levels of war. It can be argued that Admiral Halsey's tactically oriented decisions in October of 1944 nearly cost the Allies a defeat during the Battle for Leyte Gulf.[77] As can be imagined, the consequences associated with a combatant commander thinking too narrowly would be even more catastrophic. Reports indicate that General Franks had the tendency to use his daily VTCs to micromanage events in theater. It was noted that "four-star generals and their headquarters are usually concerned with moving corps, not platoons, around a battlefield."[78] Perhaps this tendency to be tactically focused resulted as an overcompensation for his lack of proximity to the TOO. If so, it illustrates yet another potential pitfall distant leaders must be disciplined to avoid.

75. Naylor, *Not a Good Day to Die,*153.
76. Ibid.
77. Vego, *Operational Warfare,*570.
78. Naylor, *Not a Good Day to Die,*152.

CONCLUSION

Although Anaconda was successful in achieving its objective of clearing al Qaeda fighters out of the Shah-i-Kot Valley, the planning and execution errors associated with this operation have provided a wealth of valuable lessons for the United States military. General Franks' decision to operate from CENTCOM's Tampa headquarters, received much criticism. In the end however, it was shown that this was not the primary cause of the problems surrounding Anaconda and if conducted correctly *distant leadership* can be an effective and viable strategy. Through a detailed analysis this paper identified short falls with CENTCOM's upper level command and control structure as the significant source of errors. In particular, the evolution of CJTF Mountain was highlighted for the negative consequences associated with its poorly planned C2 design that ultimately resulted in much of the confusion witnessed by coalition forces. By examining the lessons gained from General Franks' *long distance leadership* during Anaconda, in conjunction with the latest academic recommendations on the subject, valuable guidelines were presented for the twenty-first century combatant commander choosing to lead this country's future conflicts from a headquarters geographically removed from the TOO.

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